

Engineering Study of the Coals
On the Chicago Market

L. H. Stem

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THESIS:- AN ENGINEERING STUDY OF THE COALS
ON THE CHICAGO MARKET.

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The samples of coal for analysis were very kindly presented to the writer by the City Fuel Co., since purchased by the Peabody Coal Co., whose yards are located at Wentworth Avenue and 40th Street., Chicago. The samples were taken from the different coal piles around the yards one warm day in February and were quite wet from the melted snow so that it was thought advisable to allow them to stand for a couple of weeks before grinding for analysis, in order that any undue moisture which might have been absorbed by the coal during its exposure to the snow and water, might dry out normally. Although it is preferable to take large samples and quarter them down to the amount desired for analysis, it was not done in this case owing to lack of working and storage space. However, two or three small lumps having as near the average composition of the pile as could be told by inspection, were taken, and the state and district from which each coal came noted. The most of the samples taken came from Illinois, Pennsylvania and West Virginia, in which states, by the way, the largest share of the coal of the United States is mined. In 1900, Pennsylvania ranked first in coal production, Illinois second, and West Virginia third.

After having been air-dried for a couple of weeks, each sample was prepared for analysis by crushing with a hammer and grinding as finely as possible in a small coffee mill. This reduced the sample to particles somewhat smaller than a pin head. The samples, when ground, were placed in glass bottles with tight fitting corks to prevent their losing any moisture to the air, it having been found that a finely divided coal left exposed to the air, will lose its moisture in a short

time. The moisture determinations were made by drying one gram of the sample over sulphuric acid for from four to ten days. The most of the moisture will leave a coal in about three hours when dried over sulphuric acid, while after four days drying, no increase in the per cent of moisture can be noted. From data obtained by W. F. Hillebrand, samples dried in vacuo over sulphuric acid, give higher and probably more nearly correct results, than either drying in the air over sulphuric acid, or drying in an oven at 105° for an hour.

The dried sample was used for the determination of volatile combustible matter. It was transferred to a platinum crucible having a closely fitting cover and heated in the full flame of a Chaddock burner for exactly seven minutes. The upper surface of the cover burned clear but the lower surface was black with carbon. The loss in weight was volatile combustible matter. This determination is, at best, only arbitrary, the results varying as much as ten or twelve per cent with different operators. It is very hard to make the determination under constant conditions for several samples, different lamps often giving widely varying results. I think I reduced the liability to error from the lamp to a minimum by using a Chaddock burner and taking care to run duplicates as closely together as possible, using the same lamp and flame. One serious objection to this method is the danger of mechanical loss at the commencement of the heating, but it is thought that there is less danger of error from this source than would arise from any other method yet proposed.

After weighing, the carbon left in the crucible was burned down to an ash over a blast flame. An objection to using this caked carbon for the determination has been raised on account of its taking so much longer to burn down than a fresh sample, but I found that by leading a slow stream of air into the crucible, the carbon was reduced to ash as quickly as a fresh sample, and thus the time required to weigh out a new sample was saved.

The Parr Standard Calorimeter was used for the determination of the calorific value of the samples taken. A brief description of the instrument will be given here. Referring to the blue print, Fig. II shows the calorimeter assembled, and Fig. I shows the cartridge. A (Fig. II) is a metal can of a little more than two liters capacity which is insulated from the air by the two paper jars BB and CC. These jars have an air space between them and are held together by bolts passing through the corks KK. A deflecting collar EE carrying the brass pivot F stands in the bottom of the can AA. The cartridge D rests upon the pivot and is rotated by means of the pulley P, the power being furnished by a small water motor. The vanes fastened to the cartridge by means of spring clips, deflect the water currents downward if the cartridge is turned clockwise, as it should be. The cartridge is made of brass. The stem contains a channel for the passage of the wire fuse required for ignition. The fuse is dropped through the cap E (Fig. I) and held by the valve D until it is released by pressing down upon E. A coiled spring keeps the valve D closed when it is not held down by pressure upon E. A determination

value
of the calorific ^A of a coal is made as follows. First place the thermometer near the calorimeter and allow it to remain a few minutes to set the room temperature. During this period, the cartridge may be charged. First place one measureful of sodium peroxide in the cartridge. Then add exactly 1/2 gram of the coal which has been pulverized to pass a 100 mesh sieve and dried, either over sulphuric acid in a dessicator for 24 hours, or at 105° C in an oven for an hour. Screw the top and stem on firmly and shake vigorously holding the thumb on the cap E to keep any of the charge from settling under the valve D. Tap the cartridge on the desk to settle the charge. Next, having determined the temperature of the room, place exactly two liters of water which is at a temperature from 2° to 4° below room temperature, in the can A having first seen that the deflecting collar and pivot are in place. Set the cartridge carrying the vanes, upon the pivot and cover the calorimeter. The thermometer is then placed in position with the bulb about half way up from the bottom of the can A, a rubber collar keeping it from slipping, and the cartridge rotated at from 50 to 100 R.P.M. for a short time before igniting the charge, in order to obtain a constant temperature. The initial temperature having been taken, the charge is ignited by dropping a piece of red-hot copper wire 3/8 of an inch long into the stem of the cartridge and pressing down the valve, releasing it as quickly as possible. The rapid rising of the mercury indicates that the charge has been successfully ignited. In about five minutes, the maximum temperature will have been reached, and from the rise in temperature, the calorific value is obtained as follows:

Sample "C"

Initial Temperature - - 68.65°

Final " - - 73.10°

Rise in " - - 4.45°

Corrected for the hot wire

by subtracting .022 - 4.428°

$$4.428 \times 3100 = 13726.8 \text{ B.T.U. per pound of coal.}$$

"The factor 3100 is deduced as follows: The water used plus the water equivalent of the metal in the instrument amounts to 2123.5 grams. In the reaction 73% of the heat is due to combustion of the coal and 27% is due to the heat of combination of CO_2 and H_2O with the chemical.

If now 1/2 grain of coal causes 2123.5 grains of water to rise r degrees, and if only 73% of this is due to combustion, then $0.73 \times 2123.5 \times 2 \times r$ equals the rise in temperature that would result from the combustion of an equal weight (2123 grams) of coal.

$$0.73 \times 2123.5 \times 2 = 3100.$$

The rise in temperature would of course, be the same for any other quantities of coal and water that were equal in amount - as one pound of coal and a pound of water - hence the 'British thermal units per pound of coal'." Bates - Calorimetry, P.86.

Note:- The charge must be thoroughly shaken in order to insure complete combustion, as I found that when the charge was only slightly shaken or was left in layers, the combustion was very incomplete, the inside of the cartridge being black with carbon.

The determination of sulphur was made from the ash of the sample used in making the calorimetric test. The sodium peroxide and ash were dissolved out of the cartridge with hot water and the solution acidified with hydrochloric acid, when a clear solution was obtained. A slight excess of ammonium hydroxide was then added and the iron and alumina which precipitated out were filtered off. The solution was again made acidic with hydrochloric acid, heated to boiling, and hot barium chloride added, the sulphur precipitating out as barium sulphate. The solution was then either boiled for half an hour or allowed to stand over night, which ever was the most convenient, in order to digest the precipitate to keep it from going through the filter paper, and the barium sulphate filtered off on an ashless filter paper, washed thoroughly, dried, ignited and weighed. The amount of sulphur present was then determined from the proportion, 1mg. of barium sulphate contains 0.14 mg. of sulphur. This should be a very good method for determining the total sulphur in a coal as it is impossible for any of the products of combustion to escape from the cartridge, and even though the combustion of the coal may be incomplete, the sulphur will all go off at a lower temperature than that required for the complete combustion of the sample. Care must be taken to set the cartridge in a large beaker - #6 is the best - and cover it with a watch glass before starting to dissolve out the contents, as a great spattering is set up the minute the hot water is introduced into the cartridge, due to the violent reaction between sodium peroxide and water. The hot water should be shot into the cartridge from a wash bottle,

the tip of the bottle being introduced under the water glass over the lip of the beaker, thus doing away with the necessity of raising the watch glass.

Sulphur is detrimental in a steaming coal principally on account of the corrosive effect of its products of combustion on grate bars and other iron surfaces with which they may come in contact. Also, for most metallurgical processes, coal should be relatively free from sulphur.

The sum of the moisture, volatile combustible matter and ash, subtracted from 100 gives the per cent of fixed carbon, without any correction for sulphur, however. It is believed that half of the sulphur goes off with the volatile combustible matter and half of it stays with the fixed carbon. Therefore, the results of both the determination of volatile combustible matter and the determination of fixed carbon were corrected for sulphur and both the original and corrected results were tabulated.

"The various fuel requirements call for coals of varying composition, and the adaptability of any coal to a particular purpose is determined largely by the relative abundance of the several fuel constituents." These fuel constituents are the volatile combustible matter and the fixed carbon, and their relation is called the fuel ratio. This quantity is obtained by dividing the per cent of fixed carbon by the per cent of volatile combustible matter in the coal and is very useful in determining whether or not a coal will fulfill the requirements of the purpose for which it is to be used. Up to a certain point the fuel value or heating power of a coal increases with

the fuel ratio, the combustion of the carbon developing more heat than the combustion of the volatile matter; but beyond this point, the difficulty of effecting combustion more than makes up for the greater amount of heat obtained.

This point is well illustrated by Sample "B", a Pennsylvania anthracite. The fuel ratio is very high being 16.711. Repeated trials under all sorts of conditions failed to ignite the charge in the colorimeter cartridge. The charge was put in in layers of sodium peroxide and coal, the top layer being coal, and in layers with the top layer peroxide, but the hottest fuse failed to ignite it. The same charge was then thoroughly shaken and another fuse added but to no avail. A charge was then made by placing all the peroxide in the cartridge and then all the coal, and shaking thoroughly but no ignition took place upon the addition of the fuse. All the other samples with the exception of one or two, ignited with the first fuse and gave good complete combustion if the charge had been thoroughly shaken. In no case was more than two fuses needed to ignite the charge.

Besides the fuel constituents of a coal, there are others which are non-essential, the two of least importance being ash and moisture. The latter replaces volatile combustible matter, requires heat for its volatilization and also causes a coal to break up into fine particles as it dries out. Hence, an excessive amount of water is detrimental to a coal. The amount of water generally varies inversely as the fuel ratio, being less than 1 per cent in some coals and as high as 25 per cent in lignites. It will be noted that the so-called Smoke-

less coals given in the table of results all contain less than 1 per cent of moisture. The amount of moisture generally varies inversely as the fuel ratio. This statement is fairly well borne out by the results.

The ash in a coal simply occupies the place of so much combustible material and has not such a detrimental effect on the coal as the moisture excepting perhaps when the per cent of ash is large or it contains easily fusible constituents. In the first case, it may seriously retard combustion and in the second, it may form clinker upon the grate bars.

The amounts of moisture and ash in a coal are not shown by the fuel ratio and hence this does not serve to indicate its fuel value so much as its adaptability for specific purposes. For example, a coal for the production of gas should be high in volatile combustible matter and would therefore have a low fuel ratio.

The coking qualities of a coal are not altogether dependent upon its chemical composition, although the fuel ratio generally falls between 1.20 and 2.50. This does not mean however, that all coals having a fuel ratio falling within these limits will coke. The coal from the Pittsburg bed in the Connellsville district is taken as the standard coking coal with which all other coals are compared. In the same way, Pocahontas coal may be taken as a standard steam coal.

SAMPLES.

- A--Sherman Lump, Sherman, Ill.
B--Pittston Anthracite, Penn.
C--Youghiogheny, "
D--Farmington, W. Va., near Fairmont.
E--Kanawha District W. Va., Splint.
F---Pittsburg #8, Belmont Co., Ohio.
G--Elkins Smokeless Marion Co., W. Va.
H---Glen Block, Indiana.
I---Maryland Smokeless, Randolph Co., W. Va.
J---Powhatan Split, W. Va.
K--Collins Semi Block, Indiana.
L--Peerless Smokeless.
M--Jupiter Lump, So. Ill.
N--Pocahontas.

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